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FM WASHINGTON 270400Z MAR 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1257 OF 27 MARCH
INFO PRIORITY PARIS AND BONN

4-POWER CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON : IRAN

1. WHEN THE FRENCH AND FRG AMBASSADORS AND WARREN CHRISTOPHER MET TODAY FOR THE FIRST OF OUR CONFIDENTIAL 4-POWER MEETINGS DESIGNED TO PUT CONSULTATION ON TO AN EFFECTIVE AND SECURE FOOTING, I BEGAN BY REFERRING TO THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE OF 25 MARCH ON IRAN (YOUR TELNO. 586). NEITHER THE FRENCH NOR FRG AMBASSADORS KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT IT. I DID NOT REFER TO YOUR TELEPHONE TALKS WITH VANCE AND GENSCHER. I SAID THAT I HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS BUT THE FIRST THING THAT STRUCK ME ABOUT THIS MESSAGE AND THE REQUEST TO US TO TELL BANI SADR THAT WE WERE GOING TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WAS THAT THIS WAS PRECISELY THE SORT OF THING THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED IN OUR 4-POWER GROUP BEFORE RESORTING TO MESSAGES OF THIS KIND THAT WERE TANTAMOUNT TO AN ULTIMATUM.
2. I SAID THAT IN FACT OUR GOVERNMENTS HAD CONSIDERED THIS IDEA OF BREAKING RELATIONS BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD BY THE E.C. AMBASSADORS IN TEHRAN, BUT THEY DID NOT FAVOUR IT. IF THEREFORE WE HAD HAD THE CHANCE TO EXPRESS SOME INFORMAL VIEW WE COULD HAVE TOLD THE U.S. AUTHORITIES THAT THERE WAS NO POINT IN PRESENTING US WITH THIS SUGGESTION. THE DANGER OF DOING IT IN THIS WAY WAS THAT IT WOULD EXACERBATE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EUROPEANS ON THE ONE HAND AND THE USA ON THE OTHER. EVEN IF IT WAS COMPLIED WITH WE DID NOT THINK THAT IT WOULD NECESSARILY HELP WITH THE HOSTAGE SITUATION AND IT WOULD AMOUNT TO A REDUCTION OF WESTERN INFLUENCE IN TEHRAN. THERE WAS A DANGER THAT THE PRESIDENT'S ULTIMATUM WOULD BECOME PUBLIC WHICH WOULD WORSEN RELATIONS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC AND COULD GIVE A FILLIP TO THE HOSTAGE-HOLDERS AND TO ALL WHO WERE HELPING THEM.
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3. THE FRG AND FRENCH AMBASSADORS WHO WERE DISCOURAGED AT HAVING BEEN KEPT IN IGNORANCE EVEN OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE MESSAGE, SPOKE IN THE SAME SENSE. IN FACT, THE GERMAN WAS EVEN MORE EMPHATIC THAT THIS WAS NOT ONLY A BAD IDEA IN ITSELF BUT THAT IT WAS A ROTTEN WAY OF GOING ABOUT PUTTING IT FORWARD. HE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF AVOIDING ALIENATING MOSLEM OPINION IN DEALING WITH THE HOSTAGE PROBLEM. THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION WAS CRUCIAL TO THIS. THE SAME LINE WAS TAKEN BY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR.

4. CHRISTOPHER EXPLAINED THAT THE U.S. HAD TO DO SOMETHING. THEY HAD ALREADY EXPLAINED THAT, WHEN THE WALDHEIM COMMISSION RETURNED TO NEW YORK, IF THIS DID NOT LEAD TO ANY PROGRESS ON THE HOSTAGES, THE U.S. WOULD HAVE TO TAKE FURTHER MEASURES. MUCH THOUGH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HOPED THAT OTHER MOSLEM COUNTRIES WOULD HELP, THE U.S.'S EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION HAD BEEN MET SO FAR BY FOUR MONTHS OF FRUSTRATION. IF OUR THREE GOVERNMENTS HAD ALTERNATIVE IDEAS OF EXERTING PRESSURE IN IRAN, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD BE VERY WILLING TO LISTEN.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT WHAT QUOTE FURTHER AND MORE SEVERE UNILATERAL ACTIONS UNQUOTE THE U.S. MIGHT RESORT TO IF THEIR ALLIES FAILED TO GIVE THEM THE NECESSARY SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY THE BREAKING OFF OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, CHRISTOPHER WAS EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS. HE SAID THAT NO DECISIONS HAD YET BEEN TAKEN. BUT THE OPTIONS WERE THOSE WE HAD READ ABOUT.

6. THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT EXPLAINING ITS POLICIES AND INTENTIONS TO THE MOSLEM AND NON-ALIGNED WORLD. THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN MID APRIL WAS AN IMPORTANT DATE. HE WAS EXTREMELY WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE IF THE NEWS LEAKED OF CARTER'S ULTIMATUM TO HIS ALLIES AND OF THE LATTERS' REJECTION OF IT.

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7. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT WHEN THE PROPOSAL FOR SANCTIONS HAD BEEN VETOED IN THE U.N., THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAD ASKED THEIR ALLIES TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS AS THOUGH THE RESOLUTION HAD BEEN PASSED. BUT THE ALLIES HAD SAID THAT THEY COULD NOT DO THIS. SOME SUPPORT FROM THE ALLIES WAS NECESSARY AND IT SEEMED TO THE UNITED STATES THAT THE BEST COURSE WAS FOR THEM TO ACT IN THE FIELD OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BY THREATENING TO BREAK THEM OFF.

8. WE ALL AGREED THAT, DIFFICULT THOUGH IT MIGHT PROVE TO BE, WE SHOULD ALL TRY TO AVOID GIVING PUBLICITY TO THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THERE WERE ALTERNATIVE STEPS THAT THE ALLIES COULD TAKE AND HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF AN APPROACH TO MOSLEM COUNTRIES TO SEE WHETHER THEY WOULD NOT ASSIST.

9. WE DISCUSSED WHETHER THERE WAS NOT A DANGER THAT THE ACTION PROPOSED BY THE AMERICANS COULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF INCREASING ANTI-WESTERN INFLUENCE IN TEHRAN. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT BANI SADR WOULD TURN TO THE SOVIETS. BUT IF THE U.S. WERE FORCED TO TAKE QUOTE ADDITIONAL UNQUOTE STEPS THIS COULD LEAD TO AN INCREASED SOVIET INFLUENCE.

10. AS THE SORT OF WAY THE ALLIES MIGHT BE ABLE TO ACT I REFERRED TO THE IDEA, WHILST EMPHASISING THAT IT WAS AN ENTIRELY PERSONAL SUGGESTION, CONTAINED IN SIR A. PARSONS' TELNO. 506 THAT COUNTRIES SHOULD ABSENT THEMSELVES FROM INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AT WHICH IRAN WAS REPRESENTED.

11. FOR OTHER TOPICS SEE MY 3 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING TELEGRAMS.

HENDERSON

F I L E D

HD/MED	PS/LPS
HD/WED	PS/MR HURD
HD/NAD	PS/PUS
HD/UND	SIR D MAITLAND
HD/FRD	MR BULLARD
HD/ECD(I)	LORD BRIDGES
PS	MR J C MOBERLY

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PS/NO 10 DOWNING ST

SIR R ARMSTRONG

CAS OFFICE